

PS 3535

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1914

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*To My Friends in
The Maccabean Zion Association*

THE
BROOMSTICK BRIGADE

A PLAY OF PALESTINE

BY
SAMUEL ROTH



NEW YORK
BLOCH PUBLISHING COMPANY

"The Jewish Book Concern"

CHARACTERS

MR. EDELSTADT

MRS. EDELSTADT

REBECCA

FELIX

HADASSAH

} their children

MOSES HESS, a teacher


MR. COHEN

BENJAMIN

RUTH

} his children

SCENE

 A spacious, well-furnished chamber on Herzl Street,
Jerusalem.

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JUN 27 1914 201

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The Broomstick Brigade

ACT I

[*Enter Rebecca Edelstadt and her mother, Mrs. Edelstadt, the former young and pretty, the latter well-built, a woman of forty with a kind face. Mrs. Edelstadt is preparing to go out. Rebecca stands near the window.*]

R. (*hurries to the side of her mother*): Oh, mamma! Think of it, Felix and Hadassah are already coming home!

MRS. E.: Why that's astonishing. It's not two o'clock yet!

R.: But they're coming! Hear them clattering up the stairs!

[*Felix and Hadassah both burst into the room, Felix is a little fellow of nine, quiet and gentle; Hadassah is an impetuous, saucy girl of twelve.*]

MRS. E.: Well, of all earthly wonders! Children, what has happened to-day? Has school been closed up so early?

H.: You tell her, Felix.

F.: Oh, mamma——

H.: Don't you tell now, Felix, I'll do it!

MRS. E.: Hadassah, you're perfectly rude. But what has happened?

H.: We are simply not going to school any more.

MRS. E.: And why, pray?

H.: Because, well—we won't!

MRS. E.: Hadassah, you're an idiot. Come Felix, you tell me.

F.: It was like this, mamma. Our teacher——

H.: (*Goes behind him and pinches him in the back.*)

F.: Oh! (*turns around and looks at his sister reproachfully.*)

R. (*from window*): Oh, mamma. Moses is coming here, too.

[*Enters Moses, a young man, neatly dressed, well-built.*]

MRS. E.: Good afternoon, Moses. Aren't you teaching this afternoon?

M. (*smiles at R.*): Good afternoon, Mrs. Edelstadt. No, I am not teaching this afternoon.

MRS. E.: And why? What sort of a holiday is this?

M.: It's not a holiday, but the school has gone on strike.

MRS. E.: Gone on strike! Why, how absurd!

M.: It is not absurd, Mrs. Edelstadt. The children have a right to object against being brought up as Germans, and we teachers have a right to refuse to do it, too. We are not mere hirelings.

MRS. E.: Why, how silly you talk! Who is trying to make Germans of whom?

M.: Perhaps you don't know that the Board of Trustees have decided to teach the upper classes of the schools in German?

MRS. E.: I am well aware of that.

M.: You should be, since your husband is one of the trustees, and the chief at that.

MRS. E.: But what has that to do with you? You're teaching a lower class.

M.: But am I not a part of the institution?

MRS. E.: I don't understand, and I will not believe that what you say is true. But do you think that we will permit a thing of this sort? Children striking, indeed! It's ridiculous!

M.: How can you help it?

MRS. E.: We won't allow the children to idle around. They must return to school.

M.: But what if there will be no teachers to take charge of them?

MRS. E.: We will get other teachers. But I cannot waste any time now, I must meet my husband. He's coming with the next train from Jaffa with a rich brother of his who came with two of his children to live here.

F.: Mamma, will you be back soon?

MRS. E.: Yes, Felix, dear. I am coming back soon. Mind you, that you don't go to the pantry!

[Mrs. E. goes out while Felix and Hadassah retire into another room with a great deal of secrecy.]

R.: Oh, I am so glad to see you, Moses. But, do you know, this is liable to get you on the bad side of father, against whose decision you're now going. He'll think it a bad start for his future son-in-law.

M.: I don't care. I have right on my side and eventually he, too, must see it.

R.: That's right, Moses. You're a hero. Now let us go out for a stroll until mamma and the rest come

back. Felix and Hadassah, are you in the pantry again? See that you mind the house. [*Exit R. and M.*]

H. (*comes out wiping her mouth with a handkerchief; looks around*): Come here, Felix, quick! [*Enters Felix, whose mouth bears very conspicuously the traces of jelly.*]

F.: What do you want, Hadassah?

H.: Look at your mouth, you stupid! They'll find out that we've been there the moment they look at you. Go wash your face, and coming back bring your geography. I am going to sing NES ZIONU. See whether you can't be back before I finish. [*Exit Felix, hurriedly. She sings, and at the last word Felix bounds in with a big geography in his hand.*]

F.: There, you're not through yet.

H.: And your face is only half washed. Give me that geography. Let's see. This contains pictures of the different nationalities. Our cousins are Americans. Wonder what they look like! (*opens book*) Racial types, page 16. Here is the American. My, what a dreadful face.

F.: He looks savage. His hairs are as thick as rope.

H.: And look how his cheek-bones stick out! Why, he's a perfect savage. And, let me see, Indian. Now I remember reading a story about these people. They throw hatchets at each other when they get mad.

F.: O-o-o-o-o-oh!

H.: And to think that they're our cousins, too!

F.: No wonder you're so savage sometimes, Hadassah. It's in the blood!

H.: Don't you joke, Felix. They're liable to come in here any minute and start throwing their hatchets at us!

F. (*looking out*): There's the carriage coming up, now. I see a hatchet, quick! (*Both run under the table which stands in the center of the room.*)

[*There is the noise of wheels outside, then footsteps, and in come Mr. and Mrs. Edelstadt; with them are Mr. Cohen and his two children, Benjamin and Ruth, who in size and years correspond to Felix and Hadassah, respectively.*]

MRS. E.: What is that? No one in the house? (*Hadassah comes from under the table, blushing, and Felix follows her.*) What does this mean, Hadassah?

H.: We wanted to surprise you and papa.

MR. C.: So these are your children? (*He embraces both.*)

MR. E.: Wait till you hear them talk Hebrew, brother! You will then know that you're in the Holy Land.

MR. C.: Do they talk Hebrew?

MR. E.: What a question! It's their mother-tongue. [*Children exit together. The others seat themselves around the table.*]

MRS. E.: Simon, there has been some trouble at school to-day.

MR. E.: Trouble? What do you mean?

MRS. E.: In the first place, the children came home at one o'clock to-day.

MR. E.: How was that?

MRS. E.: The teachers sent them home and told them not to come back until they received instructions from them.

MR. E.: What impudence!

[*The door opens and a man in uniform drops a letter on a small table near the door.*]

MRS. E. (*takes it*): That may explain it. I recognize the hand of Moses.

MR. E. (*opens letter and reads*): It's from Moses. He demands in the name of the Hebrew Teachers' Union that we reverse that decision to teach the higher subjects in German. I never knew that fellow was so stupid. My future son-in-law, too, and he is going against me already.

MR. C.: What does this mean, brother?

MRS. E.: It means impudence! I am going to discharge that fellow and break up this insolent bunch of puppies who are trying to rule the School with their horse-sense.

[*Enter Rebekah and Moses.*]

R.: Are you back already, mamma? And you also, papa? (*Embraces both.*)

MRS. E.: This is your uncle, Mr. Cohen. Meet my daughter, brother-in-law.

R. (*shakes uncle's hand*): And meet my fiancée, uncle; Mr. Hess and Mr. Cohen. (*Moses and Mr. Cohen shake hands.*)

MR. E.: Moses, I have just received your letter.

M.: Yes? What is your answer to it?

MR. E.: I think it is sheer impudence. I discharge you right here from further service in any of my schools. And unless you apologize to me within twenty-four hours you need never again enter my house!

M. (*courteously*): I am sorry that you take it that way, Mr. Edelstadt. Good evening! (*Exit.*)

R. (*goes to her father*): Papa, what have you done?

MR. E.: I have rewarded impudence!

R.: He is not impudent. He is a true Jew and is defending his own language.

[*Enter the children holding hands.*]

MR. E.: Children, remember; you are going back to school to-morrow.

H. (*walks off*): No, I won't. Do you think I want to speak Dutch like you and mamma sometimes speak? (*Mimicks.*) Shprechen sie Doitch!

MR. E. (*rises angrily*): Hadassah!

F. (*clasps father's knees*): Papa dear, do let us learn our Hebrew. We want Hebrew only!

MR. E. (*reseats himself and takes Felix on his knees and pats him*): We will, Felix. You will learn Hebrew, I promise you!

CURTAIN

ACT II

[*Mr. and Mrs. Edelstadt at the Table.*]

MR. E.: Where is Rebekah this morning?

MRS. E.: She went out with Alexander.

MR. E.: I hope he decides to contribute to the Institute. You know he's so very wealthy.

MRS. E.: But rich folks are always so tight-fisted.

MR. E.: I hope it won't be so in his case. You know there is a good deal of sentiment in his coming here. His wife was an ardent, a very ardent Zionist.

MRS. E.: You don't say!

MR. E.: And he told me yesterday that it was her dying wish that he abandon business and immigrate to Palestine.

MRS. E.: He's certainly faithful!

MR. E.: But that trouble we are having is likely to have a deteriorating influence on his impression of the School. I wish those pests had been doing something else.

MRS. E.: But what can we do? Here comes Hadasah and Felix. They've eaten up all the jelly. I'll give it to them!

[*Enter Felix and Hadassah.*]

MRS. E.: Children, I've been to the pantry.

[*They stand thunder-struck.*]

MRS. E.: Did you hear what I said, children?

H.: You said that you had been to the pantry. We are waiting for you to tell us something.

MRS. E.: Don't you know anything about it, Hadassah?

H. (*shakes her head*).

MRS. E.: Don't you know anything about it, Felix?

F. (*imitates his sister's motion in the negative.*)

MRS. E.: Now I wonder who could have eaten up half of the jelly. Was it you Hadassah?

H. (*shakes her head*).

MRS. E.: Do you perhaps know something about it, Felix?

F.: (*shakes his head*).

MRS. E.: Now who, I wonder left the jar open and forgot to cover it again?

F. (*to Hadassah*): I told you to close that jar, didn't I, Hadassah?

[*Mr. and Mrs. Edelstadt laugh.*]

MRS. E.: Now for that both of you ought to be spanked severely. But it's such a beautiful day, I am tempted to punish you just by locking up the pantry and depriving you of jelly for a whole month.

MR. E. (*rises from table*): I am going out, children, but that is no reason why you should misbehave here. (*Exit.*)

[*Enter Rebekah.*]

MRS. E.: Why, have you and your uncle returned so quickly?

R.: Only I have returned. Uncle is in the School.

MRS. E.: Oh!

R. (*breathlessly*): Come into the street with me, mamma. I tell you it's simply marvellous! The children all refuse to go to school. Some of them are playing games, others have formed singing parties, still others have taken their station in front of the

schools and do nothing but shout and scream at the Directors to throw out Dutch!

MRS. E.: That's fearful! I guess Hadassah and Felix had better not go out.

R.: I tell you it's just glorious. We will win!

MRS. E.: We! Do you sympathize with those wretches!

R.: Of course I do! It's for the good of the nation!

MRS. E.: Rebekah!

R.: Now, don't get excited, mamma, and just come out with me and you too will catch the spirit of it. Then you will see the truth as those children and teachers see it!

MRS. E. (*puts on her coat and hat*): I'll go out and see. Felix and Hadassah, you must not go out. You needn't try to get at the pantry, for it's locked so that you couldn't open it if you tried all day. Ruth and Benjamin are in the garden. You can call them in and play with them. (*Exit with Rebekah.*)

H.: Now what are we going to do, Felix?

F. (*shakes his head*): We can't get any jelly.

H.: Can't you think of anything but jelly? Call Benjamin and Ruth.

F. (*goes over to the door*): Benjamin! Ruth!
[*Benjamin and Ruth come in.*]

F.: Now what shall we do, Hadassah!

H.: I've got an idea! Don't be so impatient Felix. Let me see. That's right. Do you know where the old broomsticks are, Felix?

F.: Yes, they're in the back room.

H.: Hurry-up and get them! Quick!

F. (*runs out*).

H.: Now Benjamin, did you ever fight in your life?

B.: Once, for a stick of candy!

H. (*contemptuously*): That's nothing to fight for!
And you Ruth?

RUTH: Little girls should not fight.

H.: Shucks! I'll teach both of you how to fight
when there's something to fight for.

F. (*comes in with four brooms, the straws of which
are very few*): Here you are, Hadassah.

H.: Felix, give each person including yourself a
broomstick!

F. (*gives broom to Benj. and Ruth and keeps two in
his hands*).

H.: And don't you consider me a person! (*Snatches
one from him.*) Now get ready! Shoulder guns!

RUTH: But we have no guns!

H.: Haven't you a broomstick? Isn't a broomstick
a gun?

RUTH (*awed*): Oh!

H.: Now, shoulder guns!

F. (*in shouldering sweeps Hadassah's face with the
straw end of his*).

H.: Ouch! Look out, you stupid! You almost
killed me!

B.: But what shall we do?

H. (*recovering*): We shall march to the School and
demand that they stop speaking Dutch, and if they
don't obey we'll fire at them with our guns!

F.: But Hadassah, we have no guns!

H.: Haven't I said that a broomstick is like a gun?
Forward March!

[*They march out swinging broomsticks over shoulders.*]

[*Enter Mr. E. and his brother.*]

MR. E.: Well, Alexander, you have seen our schools. What do you think of them?

MR. C.: The buildings are all right, if you mean that.

MR. E.: Are you perhaps thinking of these nonsensical demonstrations? I assure you they shall be quelled within a few days.

MR. C.: But I sympathize thoroughly with those demonstrations and I am wondering how a man with your sense can't see that they are perfectly justified.

MR. E.: Why, Alexander!

MR. C.: Don't you see, brother, that you are going against the spirit of the land? Palestine is the land of the Jews. It is sheer impertinence to attempt to teach in another language but the language of the Jews!

[*Enter Mrs. Edelstadt and Rebekah.*]

MRS. E.: Oh, you are back already! Have you been to the street! It's simply glorious!

MR. E.: What is glorious!

MRS. E.: Why the children all singing Hebrew songs and mimicking German!

MR. E.: Perhaps you even think they are right?

MRS. E.: And why not? After all, why make children learn a language they despise?

MR. E.: And you Rebekah? You are always so sensible.

R.: I am fully of the opinion of mamma. The children don't want German and it is criminal to attempt to force anything on children.

[*Enter Moses and two others.*]

M.: Mr. Edelstadt, we are a committee from the Hebrew Teacher's Union.

MR. E.: What do you want?

M.: We want you to promise to put in your voice against the decision of the Institute.

MR. E.: But I have already voted for it!

M.: You can think better of the matter.

MRS. E. (*looks helplessly at his brother*).

[*Enter H., F., B. and Ruth with broomsticks over shoulders.*]

H.: Father, we have come to make a demand!

MRS. E.: By all that's miraculous! Children, where did you get those broomsticks?

F.: Mamma, they're not broomsticks. They're guns. Ask Hadassah!

H. (*repeats boldly*): Papa, I have a demand!

MR. E.: What is it, Hadassah?

H.: We don't want any Dutch in our schools, my army and me!

MR. E. (*turns to his brother*): What do you say to that?

MRS. E.: You're beaten. See, even Benjamin and Ruth want Hebrew although they've merely gotten a smell of it!

MR. E. (*turns to Moses*): All right, I surrender.

M.: Then we have your promise?

MR. E.: Yes.

M.: Thank you. (*Goes to the door.*)

R.: Wait, Moses. (*She whispers something in her father's ear.*)

MR. E.: Moses, I want to apologize to you for what I said last night. I admit that I was too hasty.

R.: Hurrah!

H. (*to her army*): Since we can't get a chance to fight, let's sing the HATIKVOH. (*They sing as the curtain goes down.*)



- 1 Kol-od ballayvov pn
Nefesh yehoodee hc
Ulefa-asay mizroch |
A-yin ltzi-yon tzofi-yo.

0 018 391 587 3

Od lo ovdo sikwo-saynoo,
Hatikvoh hanno-shono:
Loshoov l'erez avo-saynoo
L'eer boh Dovid chono.

- 2 Kol-od dmo-os may-ay-nay-noo
Yizloo chgeshem ndo-vos,
Urevo-vos mib-bnay ammaynoo
Od ho-l'cheem al kivray ovos—

Od lo ovdo.....

- 3 Kol-od chomas machmaddaynoo
L'ay-nay-noo mofo-as,
W'al churban mikdo-shaynoo
A-yin achas od domo-as—

Od lo ovdo.....

- 4 Kol-od may ha-yardayn bgo-on
Mlo gdo-sow yizo-loo,
U-l'yam kinneres, bsho-on,
Bkol hamoo-lo yippoloo—

Od lo ovdo.....

- 5 Kol-od shommo alay dro-chim
Sha-ar yukkas sh'i-yo,
Uvayn chorvos yerooshola-yim
Od bas tzi-yon bochi-yo;

Od lo ovdo.....